

# Osage language

**Osage** (/ˈoʊseɪdʒ, oʊˈseɪdʒ/;<sup>[2]</sup> Osage: ᎠᎿᎿᎿ ᎠᎿ *Wazhazhe ie*) is a Siouan language spoken by the Osage people of Oklahoma.

Osage has an inventory of sounds very similar to that of Dakota, plus vowel length, preaspirated obstruents and an interdental fricative (like "th" in English "then"). In contrast to Dakota, phonemically aspirated obstruents appear phonetically as affricates, and the high back vowel \*u has been fronted to [y].

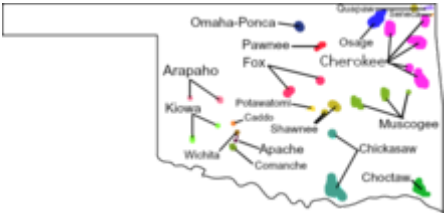
Osage is written primarily using the Latin script with diacritics. In 2006, a derived Osage script, with diacritics reflecting the Latin, was created for it; the final 2014 revision was included in Unicode version 9.0 in June 2016 in the Osage block.<sup>[3]</sup>

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## Language revitalization

As of 2009, about 15-20 elders were second language speakers of Osage. The Osage Language Program, created in 2003, provides audio and video learning materials on its website.<sup>[4]</sup> The 2nd Annual Dhegiha Gathering in 2012 brought Osage, Kaw, Quapaw, Ponca and Omoha speakers together to share best practices in language revitalization.<sup>[5]</sup> In early 2015, Osage Nation Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear announced he would make Osage language immersion a priority.<sup>[6]</sup>

Osage	
<i>ᎠᎿᎿᎿ ᎠᎿ, Wazhazhe ie</i>	
<b>Native to</b>	United States
<b>Region</b>	Oklahoma
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Osage people
<b>Extinct</b>	2005, with the death of Lucille Roubedeaux
<b>Language family</b>	Siouan <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Western Siouan<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mississippi Valley<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Dhegiha<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Kansa–Osage<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Osage</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Writing system</b>	Latin (Osage alphabet), Osage script
Language codes	
<b>ISO 639-2</b>	osa ( <span>https://www.1oc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=344</span> )
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	osa
<b>Linguist List</b>	qlc ( <span>http://multitree.org/codes/qlc</span> ) Kansa-Osage
<b>Glottolog</b>	osag1243 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/osag1243</span> ) <sup><span>[</span>1<span>]</span></sup>



Map showing the distribution of Oklahoma Indian Languages

# Phonology

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Osage phonology is quite similar to that of Kansa. However, it preserves many historical alternations that have been leveled out in Kansa; for example, Kansa \*u has merged with \*i, whereas it is still largely distinct in Osage.

## Vowels

### Basic vowels

Osage has five plain vowels:

Front	Front	Central	Back
i	y ~ ʏ		
e			o
		ə ~ ɑ	

These are written ⟨i u e o a⟩.

- /i/ is a high front vowel: like English *i* in *ski*.
- /u/ is a high non-back rounded vowel, like California or New Zealand English *u* in *dude*.
- /e/ is a half-open front vowel: like English *e* in *get*.
- /o/ is a mid-back rounded vowel: like English *o* in *bolt*.
- /ɑ/ is an open back vowel: like English *a* in *bra*.

/u/ varies between central and front, [ʏ ~ y], and frequently unrounds to /i/. It is especially far front [y] following a velar obstruent and when it is near a front vowel with no intervening obstruent. It most commonly conflates with /i/ following *ǵ* and *n*.

Usually in fast speech, the /ɑ/ is pronounced [ə].<sup>[7]</sup> This assimilation occurs after a stressed syllable, or at the end of a word. For example: *céska* [tséskə] 'cow', *tóa* [tóe] 'this one'.

### Nasalized vowels

There are three vowels that carry this feature: [ã] [ĩ] [õ]. It is quite common for nasalized [ã] to become a nasal [õ] and vice versa. Non-nasalized vowels can be heard as nasalized as well. In general, vowels tend to become nasalized adjacent to another nasal vowel or consonant when there is no intervening obstruent. On the other hand, final nasal vowels tend to become oral. However, nasal vowels are always short, regardless of their position. Examples: [ʃímĩʒɛ] 'girl' and [paːˈʏõ] 'mountain'

### Vowel clusters and long vowels

According to Hans Wolff <sup>[8]</sup> (65), common Osage vowel clusters are:

- iu [iü] for example: *niuʒõ* 'Neosho River'
- íe [íɛ]~[íi] for example: *wíe* 'I'

- ĩ [ĩ] for example: kasĩte 'tomorrow'
- iuĩ [ũĩ] for example: ékiuĩka 'don't'
- éa [éa]~[éə] for example: c' éaǵe 'I killed him'
- aĩ [ě] for example: hówaĩke 'where?'
- óa [óə] for example: tóa 'this one'

Vowel length is important in Osage, but it is hard to perceive and has a good deal of variation. For example, long vowels are often reduced to short ones when they are not accented.<sup>[9]</sup> Quintero took long vowels to be the underlying form in such situations. There is not enough information to specify exactly how the accent system works in Osage, and there is still uncertainty about Osage vowel length.

Oral vowels are long before non-stop consonants and in final stressed position. When they are unstressed in final position, they are always short.

Lengthening of short vowels often occurs in questions.<sup>[9]</sup>

Example: /ʃkǽʃta/ 'you want' becomes [ʃkǽǽʃta]?

Long vowels also arise when ǵ is omitted between identical vowels.<sup>[9]</sup>

Example: ǵak' éwaǵa 'be kind to them' may become ǵak' éwaa.

When e(e) changes to a(a), an immediately preceding c is often replaced by t (thought not always)<sup>[10]</sup>

Example: océ 'look for, hunt for' becomes otá 'look for it!'

## Diphthongs

The vowel sequences /aĩ/ /eĩ/ /oĩ/ and /ai/ are almost certainly diphthongs. The Osage script has letters to represent each of the diphthongs.

## Consonants

There are thirty-one consonant phonemes in Osage,<sup>[11]</sup> twenty-two of which are voiceless and nine are voiced. However, Osage has a rich system of stop sounds, known as the stop series, or the stop sequence. (See below)

		Bilabial	Dentalveolar	Postalveolar	Velar	Glottal
Nasals		m	n			
Stops	Preaspirated (fortis)	<sup>h</sup> p~pː	<sup>h</sup> t~tː, <sup>h</sup> ts~tːs, <sup>h</sup> tʃ~tːʃ		<sup>h</sup> k~kː	
	Tenuis (lenis)	p	t, ts, tʃ		k	(?)
	Aspirated	px~pʃ	tx~ts <sup>h</sup>		kx~kʃ	
	Ejective	p'	ts'		k'	
	Voiced	br				
Fricatives			s, z	ʃ, ʒ	x, ɣ	h
Approximants			ǵ, l, (r)		w	

## Stop series

The stop series can be grouped according to five categories:

- Voiceless preaspirated or fortis: which may be pronounced as geminates or preaspirated. As in other Siouan languages they sometimes derive from h-C sequences, but not always.
- Voiceless plain or lenis: which are tenuis, and often lightly voiced.
- Postaspirated: which never appear as a surface form.<sup>[12]</sup>
- Ejective /p' /, /c' /, /k' /. They cannot appear as the second member of a consonant cluster. Historical \*t' is /c' / in Osage.<sup>[13]</sup>
- Voiced: with b being the only member in this category. The only environment this sound may appear in is in the cluster [br]. The cluster itself generally appears in the first verb form, otherwise it is somewhat infrequent.<sup>[12]</sup>(see historical phonology section).

The ejective, fortis, and lenis series of the alphabet are not distinguished in Osage orthography.

Listed below is some features and phonological alternations of Osage:

- [px], [tx], [kx] occur before back vowels, [pɸ], [tsʰ], [kɸ] (usually) before the other vowels.<sup>[11]</sup>
- The voiceless unaspirated affricate /ts/ has two allophones: [tɸ] after [ɸ]; elsewhere it is [ts].<sup>[8]</sup>

/ts/ → [tɸ]/\_[ɸ]

Examples:

íðotse 'be open'  
ihtótse 'son-in-law'  
ðekóðce 'now'  
[mãɸtɸíke] 'rabbit'  
[ɸtɸé] 'you went'

- The glottal stop [ʔ] appears in clusters only after p, c, k, and it is not considered a true consonant of Osage. It is best thought of as a phonetic device used occasionally at utterance level, and it is typically to separate vowels that would otherwise contract.<sup>[14]</sup>
- /x/ has two allophones, [x] and [ɣ]. [ɣ] occurs between vowels, elsewhere it is [x].

/x/ → [ɣ]/V\_\_V

Examples:

[hóxpe] 'cough'  
[hpéɣe] 'gourd'  
[náãɣe] 'spirit'  
[hkáɣe] 'crow'

- The phoneme /h/ is always voiceless.
- /ð/ usually has a single allophone [ð], but in the Hominy dialect it has two allophones: [d] initially before /a/ and [ð] elsewhere.<sup>[8]</sup>

/ð/ → [d]/#\_\_a

Examples:

ðǎĩ [dǎdlĩ] 'good'  
ðǎbrĩ [dǎbədĩ] 'three'  
ðĩe [ðĩɛ] 'you'  
c' éðe [ts' ɛ · ðɛ] 'he killed it'

- The /br/ cluster also depends on dialect. It is sometimes pronounced [bəl] or [bər].<sup>[8]</sup>
- In some instances, due to morphologically complex formations, [r] is an allophone of /ð/<sup>[12]</sup>

Examples:

brĩ ʃtǎ 'I'm finished'  
abrĩ 'I have'  
waabrǒ 'I am unable'

The dentalveolar obstruents are often fricated: the ejective always (though it has other sources as well), and the other series before the front vowels /i ɪ e u/. Exceptions occur due to compounding and other derivational processes. For example, from *hkǎǎce* 'fruit' and *oolá* 'put in' is *hkqqcóla* 'pie'. (The fricated allophone is written *c*.)

Č, hč are rare, and only found in diminutives: č only in two words, *čóopa* 'a little', *čáahpa* 'squat', and hč for *hc* in endearment forms of kin terms like *wihčóšpa* 'my grandchild'. In Hominy, šc is pronounced šč.

## Consonant clusters

Osage has a simple expanded CV syllabic template: (C(C)) V (V).<sup>[15]</sup> All consonants occur initially and medially; they never occur in final position. Consonant clusters of the type CC only occur in initial and medial positions. Furthermore, only voiceless consonants form clusters, with the exception of [br].<sup>[8]</sup> The initial clusters are [pʃ] [kʃ] [ts' ] [st] [sts] [sk] [ʃt] [ʃk] [br], excluding aspirated stops.

Examples:

pʃĩta 'I'll come (to your house)'  
kʃ í 'he reached home'  
ʰtséka 'crazy'  
stúʒa 'you wash it'  
stséce 'long'  
skǎ 'white'  
ʃtátǎ 'you drank it'  
ʃkǒʃta 'you wanted it'  
bráze 'torn'

Medial clusters may be divided into two groups:

- Cluster whose first C is p, t, c, or k

Examples:

tap' òk' e 'he hit it'  
wéc' a 'snake'

nǎk'ó 'he heard it'  
 aópha 'I understand it'  
 áthã 'he kicked it'  
 áððikhã 'he lay down'  
 épʃe 'I spoke'  
 ðacpé 'to eat'  
 nǐkʃe 'you are here'  
 nǎkwĩ 'both, we two'

- Cluster whose first C is s, ʃ, x, or h

Examples:

íspe 'ax'  
 laská 'flower'  
 ókisce 'half'  
 ðaʃtú 'to bite'  
 paʃpú 'to chip'  
 iʃtá 'eyes'  
 walúʃks 'bug'  
 mǎʃcǐke 'rabbit'  
 mǎxpú 'clouds'  
 ðaxtáke 'to bite'  
 mǔíxka 'soil/dirt'  
 wǐxci 'one'

## Historical phonology

The historically aspirated series \*p<sup>h</sup> \*t<sup>h</sup> \*k<sup>h</sup> is seldom realized with aspiration today. Before back vowels they are [p<sup>x</sup> t<sup>x</sup> k<sup>x</sup>], and before front vowels [pʃ tʃ<sup>h</sup> kʃ] (written *pš ch kš*). Some speakers from Hominy assimilate *tx* to [tkx] or [kx].

*Ð*, *n*, *r* all derive from historic \*r, and *l* from \*kr and \*xr. The latter is a recent phenomenon; in the 1930s words with modern *l* were transcribed *xth* and *gth*. Historically \*r became *ð* before oral vowels and *n* before nasal vowels, but since the nasalization has often been lost, there are minimal pairs and /l, n/ are now separate phonemes. Nonetheless, intervocalic *ð* is optionally pronounced [n] in many words. It is also sometimes strongly palatalized intervocalically, to the point of becoming [j].

In words with *l*, this is sometimes pronounced [hl] or [dl]. The former derives from historic \*xl, the latter from \*kð and \*gð; these sequences have largely merged with simple \*l. This is productive; *ð* in verbs may become *l* when prefixed with *k*.

The *r* is apparently an approximant like English [ɹ]. *Br* is most common in first-person forms of verbs beginning with *ð*, where the 1sg agent prefix *w(a)-* assimilates to [b] before the *ð*, and indeed this was written *bth* in the 1930s. However, in rarer cases the origin of *br* is opaque.


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## External links

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-  Media related to [Osage language](#) at Wikimedia Commons
- Audio clips of Osage phrases ([https://web.archive.org/web/20110929062451/http://www.osage-tribe.com/language/welcome\\_sub\\_page.aspx?subpage\\_id=2](https://web.archive.org/web/20110929062451/http://www.osage-tribe.com/language/welcome_sub_page.aspx?subpage_id=2))

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